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ADVERTISING PAID AND UNPAID JOB ROLES IN SPORT: AN UPDATED POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE UK STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

The strength and conditioning (S&C) industry within the United Kingdom (UK) has seen an unprecedented growth in the last 10-15 years. More jobs exist than ever (Figure 1) and the profession is held in increasingly higher regard by those looking to enhance athletic performance. This growth has been accompanied by a substantial rise in those seeking professional accreditation; this reflected by an increase in UK S&C accredited coaches doubling from ~400 in 2011 to ~800 in 2017. Consequently, the growing interest in S&C has also seen a dramatic increase in internships,¹ many of which have been advertised as unpaid.

Whether unpaid internships are legal or not is ambiguous. The Government (HM Revenue and Customs in UK) website states that: “An intern’s rights depend on their employment status. If an intern is classed as a worker, then they’re *normally* due the National Minimum Wage.” The definition of a ‘worker’ indicates that a contract is exchanged between the two parties involved. On the other hand, if an applicant accepts a volunteer role, no monies need to be offered to the recipient. This contentious issue has been reflected by recent publications on the topic¹⁻⁵ which have highlighted that clear criteria are required from professional organisations as to the responsibilities interns will undertake and how it will further their development in the profession. Our aim is to provide an updated position statement from the UK Strength and Conditioning Association (UKSCA) on advertising paid and unpaid job roles in sport.

ADVERTISING ‘ILLEGAL’ UNPAID POSITIONS

The UKSCA’s position on advertising illegal internships has been formalised since 2013. Any organisation that outlines the specific responsibilities of employees or workers without the national minimum wage are clearly informed that the associated advert will not be publicised on the UKSCA website. It is our view to then work with, and educate, employers who may be inadvertently offering illegal roles through lack of knowledge. Feedback is provided on an individual basis regarding areas of the job advert that require amendments so as to ensure that such discrepancies are avoided in future. It should also be acknowledged that additional opportunities such as student placements can be a requirement of academic degree programmes. Such opportunities are unlikely to involve much (if any) remuneration; however, may be useful for the development of aspiring S&C coaches in the early stages of their career,

and should not be discouraged. For further clarity, we have provided definitions of such developmental opportunities in a table to ensure optimal context for both employers and coaches.

In 2016, the UKSCA launched a State of the Nation Survey and 243 S&C coaches responded regarding remuneration from their latest internship. 72% received no payment for their services and a further 13% received expenses only which made for a frustrating read. However, a notable positive was that 44% of internships led to paid employment with the same organisation. This indicates that many internships provide a platform from which clubs recruit additional support staff. ¹

ADVERTISING PAID POSITIONS

Any paid position offering at least national minimum wage can be advertised on the UKSCA website. Advertisements that have offered poor financial remuneration have often garnered backlash on social media. Whilst this consensus is often agreed upon by many, it should be acknowledged that at present proposed salary standards for the UK S&C industry do not exist. Therefore, it is challenging to provide a true objective standpoint on what is deemed ‘fair and just’ pay. However, a project that aims to offer guidelines on salary expectations in the UK S&C industry has begun.

It is not the UKSCA’s responsibility to censor job adverts and in particular the remuneration of a position. However, we do seek to raise awareness in both the profession and with employers as to the value of S&C coaches and salary ranges expected to be industry-standard. This will be further contextualised in the near future when a salary guidelines document has been completed. Finally, it should also be acknowledged that negative publicity is a powerful tool in driving positive change and this should not be discouraged if obvious discrepancies pertaining to salaries are perceived in paid S&C positions.

CONCLUSION

As the leading professional body for S&C in the UK, the UKSCA does not advertise or support the provision of illegal internships where coaches undertake the roles and responsibilities of employees for free. The State of the Nation Survey was the first step in

highlighting current data pertaining to salaries (Figure 2), employer type, and years of experience in the UK S&C industry. Lastly, the UKSCA has created an 'Early Career Development' panel, which offers grants to organisations to support their staff if they are able to show commitment and a suitable pathway (via a coach mentor system) for their staff's continued professional development. Although, it should again be stipulated that a formal and structured mentoring system should be adopted by all organisations to maximise the benefits attained from placements and internship opportunities.

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Table: Example opportunities for developing S&C coaches with accompanying definitions.

Type of Opportunity	Definition
Student Placement	If a student is studying for an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in strength and conditioning and is required to undertake duties at an organisation as part of their degree curriculum.
Volunteer Internship	If the S&C coach chooses to undertake strength and conditioning duties at an organisation voluntarily knowing that no monies may be exchanged.
Paid Internship	If the organisation deems the intern to be performing the duties of an employee or worker, national minimum wage should be offered (as a minimum requirement).

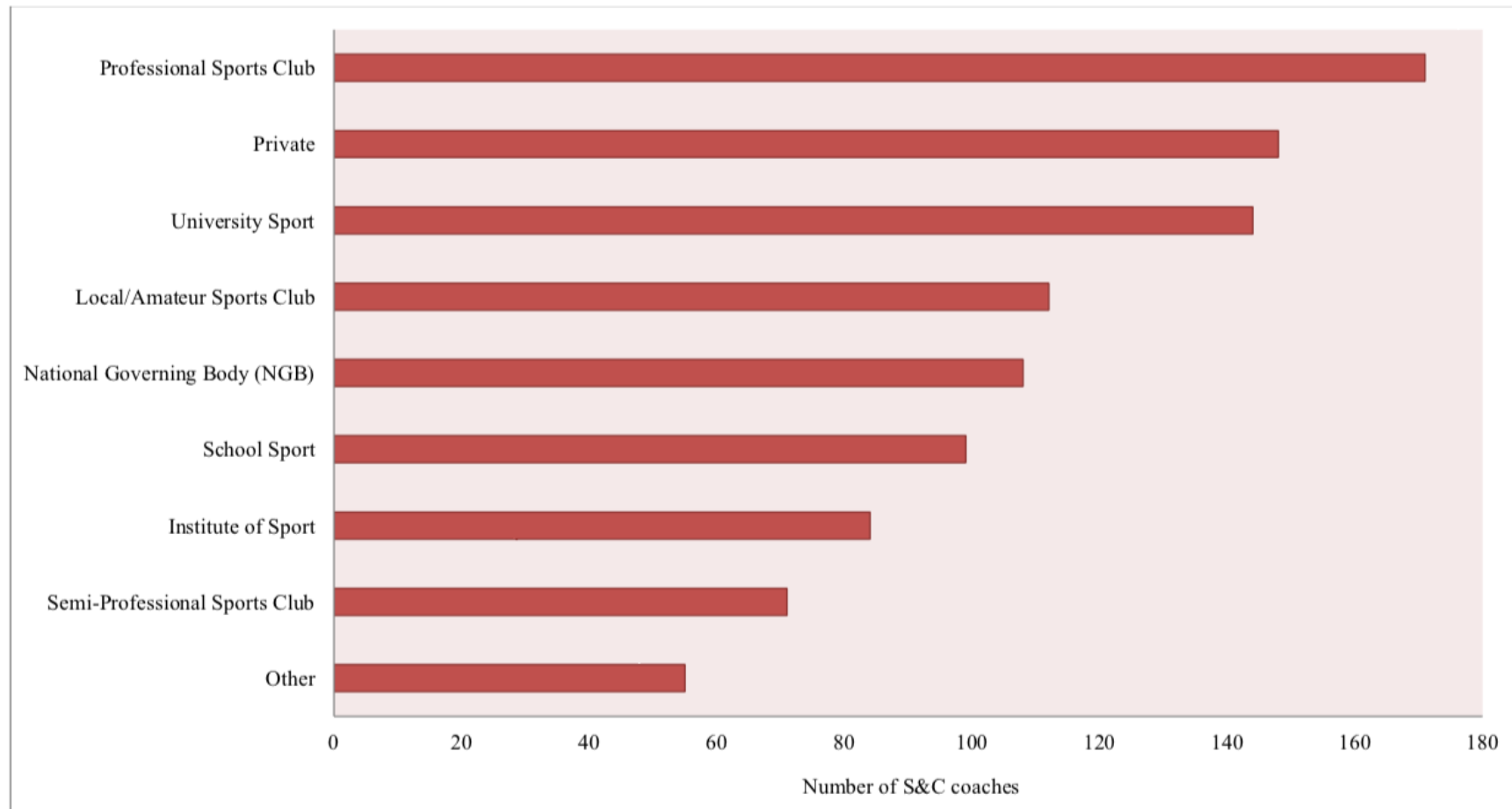


Figure 1: Current distribution of S&C coaches in the UK at the start of 2017 (results taken from the UKSCA State of the Nation Survey).

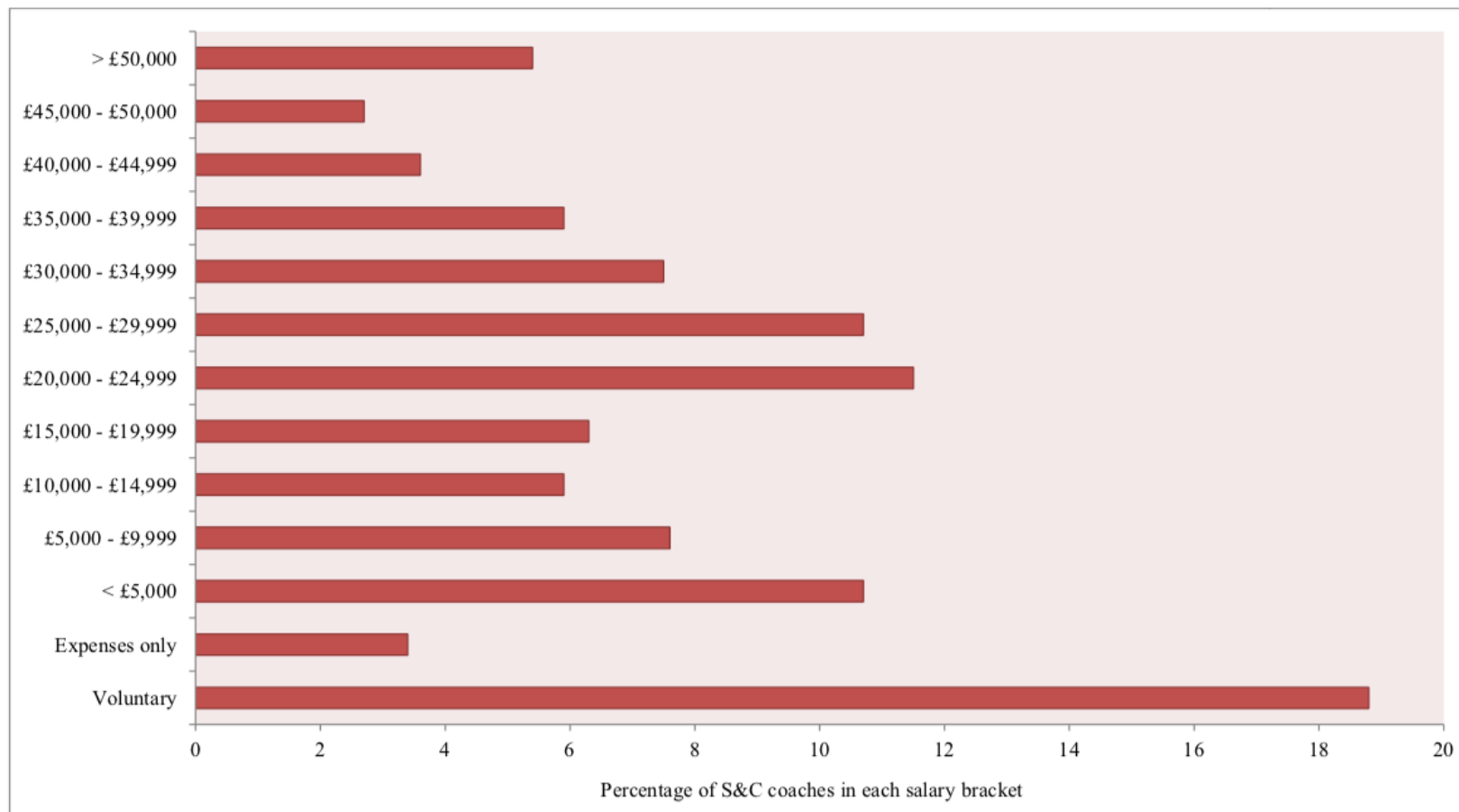


Figure 2: Annual earnings for S&C coaches in the UK at the start of 2017 (results taken from the UKSCA State of the Nation Survey and expressed as a percentage).